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ABSTRACT

This handbook is intended to assist adult basic education (ABE) staff members to increase their effectiveness as counselors. The underlying philosophy is that each ABE student has unique characteristics, expectations, and abilities which should make the teacher-student relationship individualized. The counselor of adults must know his own qualities, know his community's resources, needs, and services, know and use the team of staff members, and know his students. Some specific problems and suggested solutions are cited to serve as a springboard in helping students. Followup of former students can help the ABE counselor evaluate his programs. (MS)

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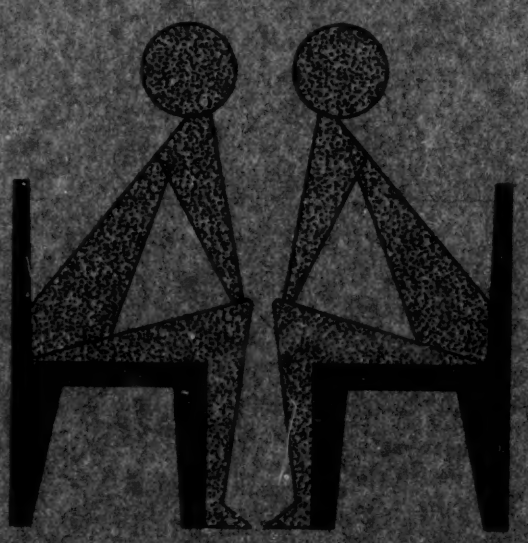

COUNSELING

in

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Edited by
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COUNSELING IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

A Handbook

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Finally, I must give special acknowledgement to my co-editor, Elvin Long. Working together can present difficulties for a variety of reasons such as distance, location and conflicting schedules. Somehow these potential obstacles never hindered us. It was a pleasure to work with Mr. Long. The time and talent he contributed to the handbook as co-editor exemplify a spirit of cooperation which should exist between state departments of education and the university.

BEJ

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Since this handbook is a little different than the usual educational textbook, I would like to review some of the events leading to this publication.

During the summer of 1972 a two-week workshop for Adult Basic Education counselors was held on the campus of the University of Missouri - Kansas City. This workshop was planned to prepare professional counselors for work in ABE programs, and the activities presumed some minimal level of professional counseling expertise.

It soon became evident that it will be many years before a professionally trained counselor will be available for each Adult Basic Education student. Yet there is a need for counseling and guidance services. Adult Basic Education teachers and other Adult Educators can be of assistance in many ways to our students. It is to this end that this handbook was produced.

The six persons listed as co-authors with the editors all were participants in the original workshop and their experiences in working in ABE programs has blended into the team effort presently suggested for Adult Educators.

A word of caution! This handbook cannot and must not be used in "cookbook" fashion. Helping another cannot be accomplished through a "cookbook" approach. The sensitive person will take into account the variables important to each situation and act accordingly.

We offer it then not as <u>the answer</u> but only as suggestions for the reader's consideration.

BEJ

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to assist Adult Basic Education Staff members to increase their effectiveness. Perhaps more students can be reached through the use of a more humanistic approach ------ working on a person to person basis.

The task of Adult Education can best be seen in the context of a constantly changing society. Technological advancement creates certain problems that face the entire educational system and more specifically, adult education. Increased occupational specialization and diversity of roles are present in every facet of American life.

Society places new demands on each of us. It demands that we change as it changes, and that we keep abreast of what is going on. It is not difficult for one to get behind or to become frustrated. Large segments of our population desire to accomplish more, but lack the skills or opportunities to do it.

Thus, Adult Education can be viewed as a re-cycling agency, helping individuals to accomplish what they want and to cope with society more effectively. Adult Education, in pace with societal change, has taken on a broadened perspective. The adult student is now recognized as a total being ------ an individual with long range and short range goals.

MEETING NEEDS

Present concern is for those factors of the individual's life that influence or affect the learning process.

Before learning of any kind can take place, certain basic needs must be satisfied. This is especially true of the adult learner. The educator should determine that the student is physiologically fit, is neither ill, tired, thirsty, nor hungry, and has had other bodily comforts satisfied, and further, attempt to help him feel secure and unthreatened in the classroom. The student should be helped to realize a sense of belonging both within and outside the group in which he is being taught. Constantly, the adult student should have his esteem as a group member heightened. He should feel his worth as a member of the group just because he is who he is.

Historically, these needs have been ignored because Adult Education sought to fulfill only academic goals of the student.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ABE STUDENT

The underlying philosophy of any successful ABE program is that students are people. Adults come to ABE classes with unique characteristics, expectations, and abilities. Life experiences have molded and shaped each student differently.

A closer look at students reveals that not every student wants a High School Equivalency Certificate, as is often assumed. We also find that everyone is not unemployed. Students differ, and adult educators must be flexible enough to accept each student as he is, on his terms. Contrary to the traditional concept, the ABE teacher-student relationship should move toward a person-to-person relationship. The key is to relate and communicate with the student on a more individualized basis.

THE TEAM APPROACH

The task is to help the adult student realize his potential. Many adult educators believe that the most effective way to do this is through a team approach which has been found successful in similar programs.

Who constitutes the team? Generally, administrators, teachers, counselors, teacher-aides, as well as other ABE personnel. Team membership will vary according to the size and location of the program. Although larger programs will have more team members than smaller programs, the size of the team has little to do with the quality or effectiveness of the program. It is possible, therefore, for one teacher to accomplish as much as a staff of five or six by performing administrative and counseling functions as well as teaching duties.

The larger staffed program may have persons employed for specific duties, and the positions may be outlined in detail, but this should not lead to an "isolationist" policy. A team approach cannot be implemented if its efforts are uncoordinated .

The idea of the ABE team rests upon the concept of role flexibility. For instance, it may be necessary for a teacher or an aide to perform some counseling functions and to establish rapport with the students. Interaction and communication among all members of the team is important. This facilitates a flow of information and the sharing of ideas that may be helpful in serving the student. In essence, the team approach is cooperation, interaction, and communication of ABE staff members directed toward meeting student needs. This is what it is all about.

THE POTENTIAL

Although Adult Education classes may be only a small segment of the student's life, they can be of utmost significance. The student's educational pursuit in the ABE program cannot be divorced from his other activities. Marital difficulties or problems at home may affect a student's performance in class or even his attendance. Financial problems may cause the student to worry excessively and hinder concentration in class.

The ABE team has the potential to affect change in the student's life and to offer a second chance to those who have given up. The team has the opportunity to provide assistance, information, resources, in addition to skills and support that enable the student to operate within and cope more effectively with his social environment. Very few ABE programs, however, have accepted this responsibility. We must expand the scope of our programs so that we can assist more people.

Not all ABE students will require in-depth personal counseling. However, many will require some help. ABE team members should be perceptive and be able to assist the student to solve his problems. Many students have no other place to turn for help, so the ABE teacher may be the first person in the student's life to show genuine concern for his well being.

Admittedly, it is virtually impossible for adult educators to meet all needs of all ABE students. It is difficult to be a social worker, psychologist or counselor as well as a good teacher-----all at the same time. We should note that it is possible for us to be more sensitive and discerning of problems that affect learning. We try to develop a deeper awareness of the student as a fellow human being. To these ends this handbook has been written.

KNOW YOURSELF

Counseling is a profession but counselors are not the only ones who can help students. Even in programs staffed with a counselor on the staff, problems inevitably arise where he may not be available immediately. A teacher, aide, or administrator will find himself suddenly thrust into the role of a counselor. In these instances, a first reaction may be panic and he may begin to analyze his own qualifications for the newly imposed role. Once the initial feeling of apprehension leaves, he will find this critical self-analysis an important first step to counseling. He must know himself.

For this self analysis, he must possess the following qualities: sincerity, tactfulness, listening ability, and emotional stability.

Sincerity. It is most important to project to the student a genuine concern for him and his problems. There must not be a feeling of "forced" sincerity. A phony will be spotted immediately and may possibly do more harm than good. Sincerity inspires the confidence and trust that is needed for establishment of rapport, essential to a good working relationship.

Tactfulness. Adult students appreciate tactfulness. Sensitivity to another's situation is the key to being tactful. The team member can improve his understanding of the student by using all of his senses which, coupled with good common sense, help to make a tactful person.

Ability to Listen. Listening is an art not easily mastered but can become more effective with training. Listening is hearing and understanding.

Most of us have developed the habit of "tuning out" what we do not wish to hear. The Adult Educator must not do this. In a session with a student, he must not only listen and understand, he must listen, understand, and remember. Many times some seemingly unimportant or irrelevant statement can be dropped by the student that may hold the key to his frustration. If this is missed, valuable time may be lost in helping him to a solution to his problems.

Emotional Stability. The team member must take a good hard look at his emotional make-up, and evaluate himself as to emotional stability. He should be critical of himself because in the final analysis he will be modeling emotional stability for the student. The success of the team is also dependent on emotional stability and lack of defensiveness on the part of its members. In this self evaluation, he may ask himself the following questions:

...Can I make an objective decision, yet still allow some room for compassion?

...Do I allow personal problems to affect my emotional well-being?

...Are my emotions stable enough to accept constructive criticism?

...Am I aware when I am in a state of stress or depressed?

As each person wrestles with these and other questions, he will gradually find himself approaching better self understanding. He should become aware of how he feels about those around him -- his family, colleagues, and students. He will discover how he reacts in various situations and how

to avoid overreaction. He should begin to realize that neither he nor others ever really know themselves, let alone others. He will recognize stereotypes and judge neither himself nor others too harshly.

It is obvious that self-awareness is not easy to come by, even with continual self searching.

Success in interpersonal relationships must begin with self understanding. The more we deceive ourselves, the more we are apt to deceive others. This can only lead to thwarted efforts and disappointment in our mission of assisting others to self awareness.

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

A thorough knowledge of the community and its resources is a necessary and valuable part of the preparation and background for all who attempt to service others in a helping capacity. This knowledge can mean the difference between success and failure in meeting the needs of those we are attempting to serve.

Knowledge of community service agencies can serve a two-fold purpose. Not only can adult educators refer their students to community agencies for help with various problems, but these same agencies can also function as recruiters for ABE programs. Service agencies are often in positions to know and have contact with persons who could benefit most from additional education. These same people may not read notices in newspapers and on bulletin boards, or listen to them on radio or television, the conventional forms of media. Even if they do read or hear the notices, they do not react unless personal contact is made and the program explained in terms that they can relate to. The contact person may be a friend who has had or is having a rewarding experience in an ABE program, or it could be a contact worker from a community resource.

Adult educators, therefore, must make their programs and services known in detail to the agencies of their community as well as convince them that they can be of service to each other.

SURVEYING THE COMMUNITY

Before community resources and background information can be utilized by a service agency or program, they must be systematically identified,

studied, and evaluated. The community survey can be employed for this purpose. Basic objectives of any community survey should center around identification of the needs of the individual and the community and the initiation of a plan of action that will move toward fulfilling those needs. Such a survey should also make us knowledgeable as to those services and sources within the community that can be utilized as part of a total program of service to persons in the community.

TYPES OF SURVEYS

There are two basic types of surveys: (1) The concentrated survey which confines itself primarily to one basic area such as the economic structure or service agencies, and (2) the comprehensive survey, usually quite broad in scope.

For ABE purposes the more extensive surveys are the most useful. Even staff members who have been long-time residents may gain valuable information from such a study for they may have not previously analyzed their community in such a systematic manner.

The community survey is essential during the developmental stage of the ABE Program. Information about the community residents in such areas as population, age groups, educational levels, school dropout rates, ethnic groups, national origins, attitudes toward education, and employment requirements and opportunities can be important early information. It should be noted that information of this type is required by the Missouri State Department of Education before approval and funding of new ABE programs.

REFERRAL AGENCIES

While most problems of an educational nature can be handled by ABE staff members, problems beyond the area of education usually require the assistance of outside persons or agencies through referral. Such situations make it necessary that adult educators be familiar with the resource agencies in the community. In the case of rural communities the survey of service agencies may have to be extended to the nearest metropolitan area where offices connected with state and federal government are located. Regional resources should not be overlooked.

The services that should be included in a community survey for purposes of referral information may vary somewhat from community to community; however, there are five basic areas of such universal concern that they should be included in any survey for purposes of referral. These areas are health services, social services, legal services, employment services, and educational programs.

The following list of sub-categories is not meant to be all inclusive, but can be used as a guide for a comprehensive study of community referral sources:

Health

1. Medical and Dental Personnel
2. Hospitals and Clinics
3. Public Health Services
4. Voluntary Health Organizations
5. Mental Health Facilities

Social Services

1. Public Assistance
2. Children's Services

3. Handicapped
4. Senior Citizens
5. Voluntary Organizations
6. Church Sponsored Programs

Legal Services

1. Consumer Protection Groups
2. Legal Aid Societies
3. Public Defender Offices
4. Juvenile Court
5. Law Enforcement Agencies

Employment Services

1. Employment Agencies (Public and Private)
2. Job Training Programs
3. Institutional Placement Offices

Educational Programs

1. Adult Education Programs
2. Higher Education - Junior Colleges, Colleges and Universities
3. Trade and Technical Schools
4. Business Schools
5. Local Schools - Special Programs

Once an agency or organization has been identified, it must be analyzed and classified as to objectives, services offered, eligibility requirements, volume and costs of services, contact personnel, and contact hours. Gaps in services should be noted and could be passed on to other agencies which might provide missing services.

The first consideration in the referral process for ABE staff members is the determination that a student needs help beyond that which can be provided by the staff. The next step is the determination as to what type of additional services are needed and if they are available in an accessible location at a cost the student can afford. At this stage the survey information becomes most important.

CARRYING OUT THE REFERRAL

Once preliminary considerations have been determined, the proposed action must be discussed with the student, for without his consent, the whole process ends. The student may be apprehensive, anxious, defensive or fearful and therefore, must be approached with an attitude of understanding and reassurance. The staff member should be able to answer questions about the services of the referral agency.

In some cases, it may be necessary to provide more direct assistance by means of a telephone call or by accompanying the student to the agency.

The responsibility for referral does not end once initial contact has been established between the agency and the student. The staff member responsible for the referral should do a periodic follow-up through the agency, the student, or both.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Many times most of the information needed for a comprehensive survey has been collected and published and is available through various sources in federal, state, and local government agencies as well as private organizations and companies. If this be the case, it may be a matter of sorting through the data collected by other agencies. If all the information needed is not available from one source, then it may be necessary to pool information from several studies.

Sources of general background information include:

U. S. Government Sources

Recent Census Report
Government Printing Office Materials
Information from Senator or Representative
Regional Health, Education and Welfare Materials
Regional Labor Department Materials

State Sources

State Manuals and Directories
Employment Security, Mental Health, and Education Materials
State College and University Extension Centers
Local Representatives in Legislature

Local Sources

Welfare and Health Agencies
School Districts
Chamber of Commerce
Newspapers and Telephone Directories

Much time can possibly be saved by adopting an "open attitude" toward resource material. If the adult educator will make a habit of routinely noting and filing material which is appropriate and usable, it will be there when needed.

SURVEY TECHNIQUES

The adult educator who wishes more specific techniques for conducting a survey will find many books to assist him. The following are techniques which might be considered: (1) Interview, (2) Telephone call, and (3) Mail questionnaire. One of these or a combination may prove successful, but each surveyer has to choose the method which best fits his goals and is not overly time consuming.

PLANNING

Whether the case be the exclusive utilization of community surveys conducted by others, a survey designed and conducted by the ABE staff or a combination of the two, it will be necessary to approach the survey with some idea, plan or a basic set of objectives as to the type of information the survey should yield. How broad in scope does the information need to be? What services should be investigated? What techniques should be employed for gathering the data? How should each agency be analyzed? How should the gathered data be evaluated? How will the information be used? What storage system is best for the information? Answers to these questions are necessary to insure that information gathered is relevant and usable, and moreover, available when needed.

KNOW THE TEAM

The implementation of facilitating relationships is of prime importance to an adult education program, and the accomplishment of this objective should be a concentrated effort of each staff member. To do this it is imperative that a cooperative relationship exist among the staff members.

THE TEAM

Who makes up the team that puts life and meaning into such a curriculum? The list includes administrators, teachers, counselors, para-professionals, secretaries, custodial staff and students -- the concerted effort of all of these is necessary to make the program really functional.

Even though each member has an idea of what his duties are, there can be no specific division lines drawn, for when a team truly operates as a team, duties tend to overlap. This overlapping is the key to a successful program. It must be carried out so smoothly that inter-staff relationships reflect a generally happy mood, relaxed and free of tension.

THE TEAM DIRECTOR

The director is the one to set the tone and temper of the program. If he establishes a general relationship of friendly comradeship and mutual respect for others as persons, then the "team spirit" will catch on. If he has a major obligation to build a balance between competition and cooperation, then his task is easier still, and he cannot afford to take a line of least resistance on this matter by overstressing competition. He must realize

and be receptive to his leadership responsibility. He is responsible for fostering open communication among the personnel, and he needs to be aware of the importance of conveying to each person involved the significance of each staff member and student to the program.

Enough emphasis cannot be placed on the need for sensitivity on the leader's part. Positive rapport among staff members will result in improving morale which has an effect on their performance.

The director must convey to the faculty that he has faith and confidence in them. He has a splendid opportunity to initiate the team approach and should be a leader rather than a dictator. A teacher or counselor can not be an effective member of the team unless he is involved in the planning and development of the program. This planning should be done cooperatively--with team members being involved. The director must show that suggestions from the team really make a difference to the program.

The director can continually promote the team approach with periodic staff meetings. By sitting down and discussing problems which have been encountered, each staff member can contribute toward needed solutions. These periodic meetings would also be an opportune time for the director to acquaint himself and his staff members with new, fresh approaches and techniques in teaching adults. Unity must prevail among the staff. The fragmented approach has a tendency toward dissipating the energies of capable Adult Basic Education personnel, while cohesiveness lends itself to a more effective, viable, and productive program.

Positive leadership and involvement of the director is the key to the spirit of the program since he sets the pattern and acts as a stimulus

to the staff and students. The extent to which he develops an environment of trust, respect, and productive involvement for the staff is proportionate to the final product or outcome.

The quality of leadership and success that the director experiences in developing rapport among the team will have an effect on the success of each teacher and may be conducive, or derogatory to, productive teaching.

THE COUNSELOR

As a result of his training, the counselor is more likely to be considered the liaison between all members of the team. It may be his task to implement the initial format by closely working and cooperating with all other members of the Adult Education Team.

There is a strong correlation between the functions of the teacher and the counselor, but the difference comes in the technical aspects of their tasks. It is imperative that the teacher and counselor work as a team in supplementing and complementing each other's activities. A two-way communication network must be established and maintained. Guidance must be a continuous process shared by all of the school personnel who come in contact with the adult students. The teacher, however, is the key person in helping the students achieve their goals. Whether or not the program has a counselor, it is the teacher--the one who works with the student on a regular basis--who is most likely to inspire his confidence and make it possible for him to open up and describe his feelings, needs, hopes, ambitions, and personal dilemmas.

Guidance services facilitate the adjustment of the individual so that he may approach the daily task of living at his best--psychologically, sociologically, and physiologically. The counselor must help the ABE student to understand himself and his needs and to help him solve his problems while learning to cope with his environment. The student must be made to feel that he is an independent person, worthy of respect, able to attain needed strengths and self-reliance. A counselor is a specialist, but he is dependent upon the knowledge and cooperation of the teachers within the program in order to be effective. Thus the majority of the counselor's efforts complement and are complemented by the facilitating efforts of a good teacher.

THE TEACHER

The major function of the teacher is to teach. In this teaching process he must see each individual as a unique creation and teach based on the student's particular learning patterns, subject matter and instructional competencies. The teacher who is sensitive to the student as a person rather than merely to his academic limitations and needs will have opportunities to exert a facilitative effect on the student. Because he is who he is and where he is, the teacher is virtually thrust into the role of counseling. There is no adequate substitute for formal training in counseling so it is understandable why teachers frequently express feelings of inadequacy and reluctance when they realize their responsibility to the adult students, but they should see themselves in a personal growth-producing role for

students. The major influence on adults, for good or bad, will be the teachers with whom they are in contact most frequently.

The teacher is not expected to act as psychologist or psychiatrist or even to perform the duties of a trained counselor or social worker. He can, however, help students toward a positive self-concept and should strive to assist them establish self-control and self-direction and to discover the reality and responsibility of freedom of choice.

These feelings are not communicated to the students by words alone. It's good to relate to the student that his regular attendance, his studying outside class time, etc., are appreciated, but the teacher's concern must be felt by the student. The teacher's attitude is crucial. He must be loyal to his students and reinforce their confidence. Their formal learning may have been sketchy, but they have learned much from experiences and many of these have not been positive. For many years students have been won by the magic of the teacher's smile, the strength of his encouragement, and the wisdom of his advice. The effective teacher keeps each student moving toward his goal, and helps each find the way to satisfaction in learning.

Addressing students by their names, phoning them when they are absent, expressing interest in their families and hobbies, arriving early in order to greet students upon arrival, or staying after class for students who desire extra time are all acts which enhance the "helping" relationship.

Be human with them--relate on a "people to people" basis. Be yourself! Be congenial to the people because you want to, not because it is expected

of you. Be able to admit your mistakes and your lack of answers in some areas, but be willing to help them locate the correct answers.

To function successfully the teacher must possess certain traits such as genuine warmth toward and concern for other human beings, the ability to recognize the right of individuals to make decisions for themselves, and have an overwhelming willingness to listen to others. He must be capable of relating to people. His attitude as related to the student is of vital importance, and he must show a sincere regard for the student and maintain an empathic responsive relationship as opposed to a sympathetic entanglement. It is imperative that the student feel that he is recognized as a person worthy of respect and able to attain needed strength and self-reliance. The teacher must demonstrate understanding and acceptance of the individual and not pass judgment on him, but rather be a person who will assist him in realizing how he perceives and relates to his world. Thus, the teacher can help the student bring his problems into perspective and will aid the student in making positive decisions with regard to the situation.

PARA-PROFESSIONALS

Many ABE teams are fortunate to have para-professionals who can be quite helpful in enhancing relationships in the classroom and can complement the efforts of the teacher in enriching the learning experience for the student. The para-professional is often in a prime position to relate to students in circumstances other than academics and could very well be the difference between success and failure in reaching students. Those

things which apply to teachers certainly apply to the para-professional who must be considered a valuable, equal team member. Other team members should be especially aware of possibilities for para-professional utilization and encourage participation on his part. His efforts should be recognized and rewarded, and the team should constantly seek new creative ways to use this potentially valuable member.

STUDENTS

Students can be quite supportive of and helpful to other students because of their previous experiences. A student may feel freer to ask questions of or seek the help from another student. Helping a fellow student can be quite rewarding.

Since the Adult Program is geared to the ne of the student, it is obvious why the student should take an active part on the team.

The persons directly involved should have a voice in formulating what concerns them. True, the Adult Program is initially laid out by the directors and staff, but this does not always mean that what they have planned can be implemented. Many times inadequacies cannot be spotted until the plan is put into use and students should be encouraged to give feedback. The students are there in a learning capacity, but they can be made to feel that the program operates under the democratic spirit; that they are free to exercise the functional interpretation of freedom of thought and expression. The wise teacher or counselor encourages students to take an active part in the ABE Program.

OTHERS

There will undoubtedly be other persons connected with the ABE program who may have a significant effect on the success of the student. Two such persons are the secretary or receptionist and the custodian. If they are made to feel that they are part of the team, while performing designated tasks, they will be free to extend a helping hand if the opportunity arises. The following example illustrates this point quite well.

Robert Smith is a postal employee who usually works days. During special seasons though, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, he works overtime. His three children have reached the ages where they no longer live at home

Just before Christmas, after discussing the situation with his wife, Mr. Smith decided to enroll in an Adult Education course. His only time to find out about the classes before the semester began, was late on Friday evenings. He realized that this might be an interim period between the time day school closed and the adult personnel would be there to give him information, but he decided to take a chance.

Upon reaching the school (which was locked) he knocked on the door until he was heard by a custodian. After he gained entrance, he put his questions to the custodian. If the custodian has been made to feel he is an integral part of the team, he will be able to inform Mr. Smith politely that adult courses are held at the school and on what evenings and at what hour they meet. He can supply Mr. Smith with directions as to where to report on his first night and the name of the person he should contact.

Armed with this information, Mr. Smith can return home, feeling confident and less wary about taking the second step. He can make further plans.

Let's say that on the night he returns, he asks for and meets the secretary. If the secretary has been made to feel she is an integral part of the team, she can supply him with an application blank, help him to fill it out if necessary, tell him when the classes are scheduled to meet and who his teacher is likely to be. After this is done, she might direct him (or take him) to the classroom.

Carrying the example further, let's assume that the teacher is not in the classroom at the time Mr. Smith arrives, rather the para-professional. If there is a good working climate between the secretary and the para-professional, the secretary introduces Mr. Smith to the aide and explains that he will be working along with the teacher in the classroom. If the para-professional feels as if he is an integral part of the team, he will not allow Mr. Smith to sit in awkward silence until the teacher comes. He will feel free to discuss with Mr. Smith some of the things the course might cover. After the teacher arrives, the para-professional can introduce the two, and the teacher can discuss Mr. Smith's plans and begin the development of a program.

WORKING WITH ETHNIC OR MINORITY GROUPS

The persons working with minority or ethnic groups should be highly personable. Their strengths should greatly outnumber their weaknesses.

Their prejudices and biases should be few. They should be extremely patient because their first contacts could reveal hostility and distrust. This does not mean that the team member is never going to be accepted by the group.

Ethnic or minority groups may be clannish and have the tendency to join together quickly against anyone they would consider an "outsider" or "not one of them." In most instances the team member finds himself in this position. How he handles the situation will require the utmost skill in tact and timing. He should familiarize himself with their culture and be genuine in displaying his knowledge. This is where timing is essential. He must feed his knowledge of them to them in bits and pieces; mostly through casual conversation.

Keen, but unobtrusive observation is also necessary in counseling these groups.

OVERGENERALIZING

In trying to spotlight the importance of staff awareness as it relates to Adult Education, one other point should be mentioned--and that is making generalizations and assumptions.

Just as we often mistakenly assume that all adult students who enroll in our program are seeking the High School Equivalency Certificate, employment, or are "disadvantaged," experience has shown that persons enroll for a variety of reasons--many times for self-fulfillment purposes only. If we stereotype a student, our thoughts are reflected in our actions and we treat him accordingly. By the same token, generalizing and assuming too much about team members can be potentially dangerous to staff relations.

In all Adult Education Programs even though job titles are listed and duties are referred to, the actual success of a program will depend on a good working relationship between staff personnel where duties can overlap smoothly and no conflicting lines are drawn. Needless to say, the counselor can be the foremost agent in helping to bring this about. If he has the team spirit himself, he can hopefully instill it in others by the way he acts; for working together as a group, but accepting people as individuals, can bring to fulfillment whatever potential each has, and this should take the highest priority on any program's list of objectives.

SUMMARY

Enough emphasis cannot be placed on cooperation of the "team." It is mandatory that all staff members form a cohesive unit for a successful program. With combined efforts, "helping-relations" should dominate the thinking of all personnel throughout the program.

Perhaps the theme of "Promoting Facilitating Relationships" could be summed up best in the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace!
Where there is hatred. . .let me show love.
Where there is injury. . .pardon.
Where there is doubt. . .faith.
Where there is despair. . .hope.
Where there is darkness. . .light.
Where there is sadness. . .joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled. . .as to console,
To be understood. . .as to understand,
To be loved. . .as to love:
For it is in giving. . .that we receive:
It is in pardoning. . .that we are pardoned:
It is in dying. . .that we are born to eternal life.

If we can render a portion of these services to the adult student, it should impart satisfaction to us to know that we have contributed to his gaining a more fulfilling and satisfying life.

KNOW YOUR STUDENT

Each ABE program is unique, reflecting the needs of the adult students it serves. A large percentage of those enrolled in ABE will have as a goal the attainment of the High School Equivalency Certificate. This goal will lend itself well to the prescriptive teaching of an individualized learning program. In applying this as a teaching technique we must find out where the student is, design learning experience, and evaluate student progress.

To develop an individualized course of instruction for the student, it is important to know the basic skills he possesses. Since each student comes to the ABE program with varying backgrounds of academic skills and a multiplicity of immediate and long-range goals, many teachers find in their classes a broad range of individual differences. The teacher's knowledge of the student, his awareness of the student's goals, and familiarity with the student's needs may stimulate the student toward success.

REGISTRATION FORM

Before a prescribed course of individualized instruction can be developed we must have some pertinent information about the individual student. Some type of registration form will probably tell us such things as his name, age, address, sex, amount and kind of prior education, and some general idea of why he enrolled in the program. This may be administered in an informal session during the first class meeting or on a group basis.

The form should be simple, free from ambiguity, and impersonal enough to avoid making the student feel that his privacy is being infringed upon. Only data to be used should be gathered. To avoid student embarrassment, the staff member should be available to answer questions on an individual basis.

PLANNING INTERVIEW

The student's motives for enrolling in the program should become evident in these sessions and should determine the direction of the interview. The information obtained from the interview and testing is useless if only recorded and stored in a file cabinet. Pertinent information that is useful for individualizing a program of instruction should be gone over carefully with the student. The teacher then applies his expertise in personalizing a program from the student's starting point and culminating it with the attainment of his goal.

TESTING

The next important step in student appraisal is testing to determine the student's level of achievement. Many adult students, however, view tests with varying degrees of anxiety and distrust and in order to minimize these effects, careful consideration and discussion of their attitudes toward testing should be given.

Practice in test taking may help. Students learn to cope with the tension they encounter in the test situation and could be relevant to their goals of completion of various appropriate tests.

In spite of structuring during the pre-test session, animosities and antagonism may still exist. The teacher should be sensitive to the readiness of the student for testing. These students may be tested individually at a later date. Their placement in the program can be made temporarily on the basis of other appropriate appraisal methods.

In selecting a standardized achievement test, probably the most important consideration should be whether the test measures the areas of achievement to be evaluated. A second consideration is the administrator. Reporting of test results is still another factor. Further factors worthy of consideration are cost, ease of administration, method of recording answers, and ease of scoring.

The test administrator should be thoroughly familiar with the testing procedure, and adequate preparations should be made.

After testing, the results should be recorded and any deviations from standardization procedure should be noted and taken into account in interpreting results.

Remember most achievement tests do not have norms on the adult population. Since there are many limitations and cultural biases of achievement tests, they are frequently misused and misinterpreted. The best achievement test is a sample of the student's performance at one particular time and subject to sampling error inherent in the instrument. The same test or equivalent form given a few days later may produce scores that vary significantly from the original test scores. Know the test, don't overgeneralize results, don't use results to label the student.

THE INTERPRETATION

After evaluating the adult with standardized test instruments his results should be clearly interpreted to him. Internalization of this information thereby makes it possible to set more realistic goals.

Advanced preparation for the interview should have the teacher ready to handle this situation. The interview is a personal involvement and should be free from interruptions and in a confidential setting. Background information about the student should be carefully studied.

Reactions to test results vary from student to student. Some have a fairly accurate estimate of their mastery of basic skills, while others have been totally unrealistic in their expectations. An accepting attitude by the interpreter regardless of how low the scores should be maintained while discussing the scores. The explanation the student gives for his scores may offer insight to understanding the student. Listen carefully.

How the student sees himself after test interpretation is relevant to his establishing realistic goals for himself. Discouragement over low scores can be dealt with by discussing short range achievable goals such as remediation in reading to improve comprehension. Try to determine what the student sees himself doing following his completion of the ABE program. What have been some of the things he has tried to do but was unable to because of his not having a diploma? Has he considered that the high school equivalency certificate may open doors but still not guarantee employment without particular skills or training? Are there specific occupational opportunities available in the community? Does he have a physical disability

that has been a handicap in obtaining employment or holding a job? What kind of work has he done that gave him the most satisfaction? How well does he get along with other people? What are his leisure-time activities and/or hobbies?

Relate to the student how his scoring on the achievement tests will be utilized in developing a learning program specifically for him with his particular goals as the end result. In establishing immediate and long-range goals, care should be taken to keep them realistic. To reinforce hopes and aspirations that obviously are impossible for the student to reach is a form of deceit that no teacher or counselor should be guilty of practicing. If you have stated the difficulties that will be encountered and the limitations he brings to his quest and the student still shoots for the moon then support him. He just may make it! At very least you have established a relationship for future contacts if he decides to redirect his goals and needs help.

When you feel the student understands the test results use your teaching expertise to help plan his program for his assault on the GED. If he has a need for supportive assistance these services should be covered in detail. You may need to take on an information giving role if this is called for. If specific information is called for that isn't available tell him so and make arrangements for acquiring it. If referrals are necessary have names and telephone numbers handy and make the necessary arrangements for the student. At this stage of the procedure give support by doing. Later the student can be expected to exercise his independence of you once his goals have been recognized and internalized.

As the teacher and student begin to formulate the desired goals and activities, it can be helpful to make a record for the student's file. Needs and perceptions can change, however, and such plans should always be considered tentative and subject to periodic review.

No set routine works in all cases. What works for one may not work for another. What works one time may not work the next. Each individual is different and a different set of attitudes may be presented in each interview.

FURTHER TESTING

Follow-up testing for students wanting interest or specific aptitude tests should be arranged in a manner that causes the least conflict with their classroom activities. Arrange for time slots to be reserved for specific aptitude or achievement testing. Continue contacts with students for making educational and occupational information available to them.

Follow up referrals to specific agencies to see what action has been taken on the student. Help arrange appointments and remind students of their commitments where necessary. Make a special effort to help students with their experiences with rules, regulations, and guidelines whether federal, state, or local. Their experiences with governmental red tape has frequently induced strong feelings of hostility and frustration. Their needs are usually immediate and the slow process of getting results through bureaucratic channels is a source of anxiety and impatience. Establishing and internalizing long range educational and occupational goals is difficult when your immediate concern may be a pregnant daughter, a son's scrape with the law, or where the next meal for your family is coming from.

The ABE student who has attained the competency to attempt the GED is not always at a stage of emotional readiness to attempt the test. The test represents such an important milestone in his life that he is reluctant to face even the remote possibility of failure. Personal assurance from the team may be helpful.

Appraisal and assessment of the student is a constant and on-going process as long as the student is in the ABE program. Brief attempts at student appraisal will never be perfect. There is no device presently in existence that will make complete and accurate information available about the student. One must do the best he can with the tools presently available. Standardized tests have their various errors of measurement and every interview is subject to the error of judgment of the interviewer. If we allow for the element of error, if we have an awareness of our limitations, and the limitations of our tools there should be sufficient humility in our efforts to be of beneficial service.

All members of the team should remember that their relationship and role may vary with each individual student. For this reason it is important that the staff function as a team, sharing knowledge and information that may be helpful in dealing with and solving students problems. Excellent lines of communication and cooperation must continually be developed and kept open between all members of the team. Only through a spirit of team work can we be most effective in meeting the needs of adult students.

HELPING STUDENTS

An Adult Educator is a team member in a position to either boost or deflate the self-esteem of the adult student. Many things you do or say -- knowingly or not -- make the clients feel demeaned, inferior or even non-existent as persons. In communicating, you need to be keenly aware that messages are sent in the following ways:

1. Verbal - the words you use and the effect their meaning has on other people.
2. Non-verbal - the way you act, how you think, how you feel and how other people read your thoughts, your actions and your attitudes. This is the communication that prompts such expressions as "actions speak louder than words," or "what you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say."

LISTENING

You will need to be aware of your listening skills. Productive listening is a fine art, not always easily achieved as we are not natural listeners. In considering the disciplined listening, essential in a communicative approach, it is not intended to infer that this is another "thing to do" - to sit down and merely listen to the individual talk.

Keep in mind that your listening is colored with your attitudes, your own positive or negative feelings, especially your guilt feelings and inadequacies which play a vital role. The way we listen and the way we look, or don't look, as we listen influences the way people talk to us and what we elicit, ascertain or learn from them. Listening is more than passive or idle silence - it is active, attentive, extensive, diligent, regulated and open-minded participation. IT MEANS SOME ONE CARES!

Let the adult tell his problems in his own way. If you do ask questions make them straight-forward, simple and use them as a point of summary, clarification, confirmation or as a means of drawing the individual into conversation. Tricky questions, or those interpreted as such by the adult, will stop the helping relationship cold. You need to be ever sensitive to clues that associate ideas, sudden shift directions, repeated references, gaps and inconsistencies in information. Your alert observations can guide you to the real meaning and truth behind the spoken words.

NON-VERBAL CLUES

Often telling you more than the spoken word are the non-verbal clues, an integral part of the listening process. Watching the individuals posture, gestures and facial expressions will enable you to interpret moods, feelings, problems and meanings to what he says verbally. These clues may prove invaluable in assisting you to understand and interpret the "hidden-agenda" existing within the individual with whom it is especially difficult to communicate.

As the helper in the helping-listening relationship you need to restrain any tendency to "take over" and make decisions for the individual. Once the problem has been uncovered, you can through skillful, tactful questions and statements display a number of alternatives and their consequences. But the individual must be allowed to choose his solution and accept full responsibility for his choice. Temptation to influence becomes unbearably strong, particularly at times when the individual chooses a path different from what you would like or think is best for him. This is, no doubt, the

most difficult, frustrating and heartbreaking part of the job as a helper. It must be remembered, however, that people will carry out effectively only those decisions to which they themselves are fully committed. The decisions made may necessitate quite a change in the individual's behavior. His ability to effect this change may be attributed directly to your continued involvement and unconditional belief in him - a person who stands for certain things - a person who wants to be accepted - a person who has worth.

PROBLEMS

The role in which the person sees himself is of prime importance to his success in meeting his goals in the Adult Basic Education Program. Keep this in mind as you view the following problems encountered by the experienced Adult Basic Education team. The solutions given have been effective in some circumstances but are not intended to imply a panacea for your problems in your situation. It is hoped however, they may serve as a springboard and with your creativity and innovations you may find workable solutions for specific problems.

PROBLEM: Is it necessary to set goals with students?

SOLUTION:

*Goals should be established as soon as possible - preferably during the initial interview. These goals may be of a long range nature and subject to change.

*The goal should be developed by the student with teacher and counselor help where available.

*The student has every right to know where he is going and the progress he has made toward that end.

*The student has a right to change his mind.

PROBLEM: I'm always reading about the importance of establishing a "warm, informal classroom climate" but it seems to be beyond me. What am I doing wrong?

SOLUTION: *Relax, be yourself

*Try to be consistent in your approach. Formality or informality may not be as important as being yourself.

PROBLEM: I sometimes find it necessary to criticize a student; to tell him he made a mistake or was inattentive or careless about his work. How can I do this without hurting his feelings?

SOLUTION: *Many adult students are insecure about their ability to study and learn, so it is easy to make them feel inferior or rejected. On the other hand, honest constructive criticism may be appreciated.

*All criticism should, of course, be made in private. If possible, it should be approached in a positive way. For example, if a student consistently makes errors in his written work, you might say: "So many things about your work are good; let's see what's causing these errors. Maybe your thoughts are moving faster than your pencil. Slowing down, and reading your paper over carefully after it is completed, might be the answer to this problem." Accentuate the positive - be optimistic!

PROBLEM: I've been told that every adult teacher should be a good counselor. Is this so? I've been consulted on problems that I couldn't possibly solve.

SOLUTION: *To a certain extent, it is true. But don't try to play the role of psychologist or family advisor. In many situations, particularly those involving mental or physical health, the

wisest thing you can do is to refer the troubled individual to the appropriate school or community agency.

*You may be the first and only person with whom the student has had enough confidence and rapport to discuss family or emotional problems. Let him know you care!

*Listen

*You need to recognize that first you are his teacher-friend and you have limitations in both the time and professional expertise he requires. You may have to refer - do your homework!

*In some cases you will be the one to suggest possible alternatives such as asking other agencies for assistance or a psychologist for help. You'll need to remain involved, but in a supportive role.

PROBLEM: What do I do when a person tells me he has venereal disease? He has lost his job because his employer is aware of the problem. His wife, however, is not and he doesn't want her to know he has seen other women.

SOLUTION: *Listen! Don't condemn.

*You may need to refer him for medical help or for employment.

*Be aware of the difference between suggesting alternatives and giving advice.

PROBLEM: What do I do about the person who hasn't gone far beyond his particular neighborhood, and is innocent about birth control?

SOLUTION: *Listen

*You may need to provide information and/or make a referral.

*Check your own attitude on the topic. Support his efforts to explore beyond his neighborhood.

PROBLEM: How do I handle a situation where a young lady comes to ask advice about having an abortion?

SOLUTION: *Listen, don't judge.

*It is her problem and it should be her decision, support her until she is sure.

*Be aware of legal aspects.

*You may have to refer her to a medical or legal agency.

*Check your own attitude.

PROBLEM: What are my obligations to the student when he tells me things confidentially that conflict with the law?

SOLUTION: *Listen

*You may have to suggest he not tell you anything incriminating.

*Check your attitude.

*Help him be aware of alternatives.

*You may have to refer to a legal agency.

PROBLEM: How do I handle a situation where a girl 17, still living at home, becomes pregnant - the father is an older man - and both are students in my class?

SOLUTION: *You don't handle it! You can listen.

*Check your attitude.

*Be aware of referral possibilities.

*They both may want to talk to you - separately or together.

In the above situations we have tried to emphasize the following points:

You may be the first contact when a student seeks help.
There may be many kinds of problems.

Let the student tell his story.

The stated problems may not be the actual problem. Listen carefully.

One's own moral attitude can affect the degree to which we can help another.

Try not to be shocked or upset.

Referral is always a possibility. We should have access to information about referral resources.

In helping others to make decisions (to learn decision-making procedure) we must encourage them to take into account alternatives rather than to give advice.

We must not project a "phony" image but try to be ourselves.

It must be re-emphasized that a helping relationship cannot be programmed. We must approach each person with a problem on an individual basis and use good common sense based on genuineness and understanding.

FOLLOW-UP

Have you ever wondered what happens to the student after he leaves the ABE program? Why did he leave? What is he doing now? How can we be of further service? For whatever reason a student leaves the program, a follow up can provide invaluable information for ABE programs.

WHY THE STUDENT LEAVES

It is all too easy to accept the fact that there will always be drop outs and to forget that the student enrolled and attended for some reason important to him. Perhaps of more importance is the reason for dropping out.

Find out why the student left; use tactful and skillful approaches when conducting this investigation. Attempt to establish the real reason. In many cases, the student will give a superficial response to avoid revealing the truth. There may be elements in the program operations that are discouraging to the adult learners. There may be persons on the staff that are not relating to the students positively. There may be student needs that have not been met, and student problems that may have gone undetected. Thus a thorough follow up all on ABE dropouts would provide valuable feedback to the team that may produce needed changes in the structure of the program and prevent others from dropping out.

LOCATING AND APPROACHING THE ABE DROP OUT

Student records should be helpful in the location process. Inquiries to other students may provide useful information also. After he has been located, what next?

Approaching the ABE drop out requires a great deal of tact and skill. When the student is located, avoid the "truant-officer" approach in persisting to demand answers to questions about his leaving. As the student attended classes voluntarily, it is up to him to stop attending when he so decides. Keep in mind that the student does not owe any explanation.

A letter, a telephone call, a visit, or any personal contact with the former student can yield the desired information, if handled properly. Contacting the former student through a letter can be an effective method. Correspondence by mail does not allow for two-way communication, however, this type of contact can be a prelude to other more personalized method.

A telephone call to the student can at first be merely an inquiry about his health or a statement letting him know that he has been missed. Who should call? Any member of the team may call the student, or even another student could call. The important point is that someone associated with the ABE program is reaching out to the former student. A telephone call is more personalized than a letter. The person is given the opportunity to talk with someone------consequently, communication is better. Questions can be asked and answered. If we are perceptive, we can detect certain attitudes by the way the student responds, the tone of voice, etc.

Adult Educators agree that the face-to-face contact is the most effective approach. This is primarily a visit to the student's home. Both communication and interaction can take place. Facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, as well as conversation can be observed and may provide valuable input in determining real reasons for dropping out.

The former student, as a result of the contact, should feel that the staff is genuinely interested in him and what happens to him. He should also feel that he would be welcomed if he decided to return to class.

SUCCESS: GOAL ATTAINMENT

Many persons leave because they have accomplished their specific goal of earning a High School Equivalency Certificate, or passing a vocational entrance examination, or even learning to read or write. Hopefully, by the time the student is ready to leave the ABE program, facilitating relationships will have developed between the student and team members. At this juncture, the student should feel that the ABE staff (or at least some member of it) is genuinely concerned about his well being. This relationship can help in future follow-up contacts.

THE EXIT INTERVIEW: ORIENTATION FOR THE OUTSIDE

The student has accomplished his specific goal. He has made it known that he is ready to leave the ABE program. It would be helpful to the student if he is given some type of "preparation" for the outside. This orientation may be given in a session referred to as the "exit interview." Team members should try to equip the student with a workable knowledge of available community resources. He should realize that there are solutions to his problems, and that there are agencies and community services available to him specifically. He should feel he is always welcome to return to the ABE program for assistance in solving future problems or pursuing newer education goals.

Also during the exit interview, the student and staff members should re-examine the student's goals ---- long range as well as short range. Assistance should be given in determining whether or not these goals are realistic. A re-examination of the student's abilities and performance should also take place. You may wish to go over his records with him in an attempt to help him conceptualize himself more accurately. Remember that this is the student's decision, the team should only assist.

Encourage the student to establish and maintain goals that are realistic to him. Offer some type of psychological reassurance, emphasizing that he has a "new lease on life" and another opportunity to succeed. This is very important. He can approach the "system" with a sense of confidence and pride ---- assured that others (the ABE team) are confident in him.

Let him know that you are concerned and will contact him later, encourage him to let us know where he goes and what he does.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE STUDENT AFTER HE LEAVES?

Find out. After some time has passed, attempt to make another contact. See if his plans are materializing. Find out what modifications if any have been made in his goals. Again, offer some type of encouragement or reassurance. Another consideration is for updating the office records. Information obtained through a follow up should be placed in the student file.

HOW CAN ABE CONTINUE TO BE OF SERVICE?

When a student leaves our program, it is not the same as a student traditionally leaves a public school. All ties should not be severed. The

door does not close automatically behind him. Instead, we should adopt an "open-door" policy. The student should be able to return; to call upon the ABE program even after he has discontinued classes. Availability to former students is essential. After all, availability is the logical extension of facilitating relationships.

The former student may wish to seek counseling again from some team member. ABE can continue to serve as a referral agency to the former student. Although the student has been equipped with a workable knowledge of the community, there may be instances where additional information is needed.

Former students may request such services as letters of reference in seeking employment. The team and the student should know each other well enough that a request of this nature will be gladly received. Finally, a student may wish to come back to the program. Inasmuch as the door is always open ---- he can.

A final word on follow up. In Adult Basic Education, it is ever important to maintain relevant programs. We must continually evaluate our programs for strengths and weaknesses and modify accordingly. Only then can we be somewhat assured that we are indeed attempting to meet the needs of our students and reach out to even wider segments of the population.

There is now considerable outside pressures upon educational programs to be accountable, but the conscientious professional educator is constantly seeking relevant feedback on his efforts and modifies them accordingly. He believes in evaluation as absolutely necessary and evaluates without fear of accountability being imposed from without. He does not lock the barn after the horse has been stolen.

AFTERWORD

This, then, is our handbook. It was prepared by a team and emphasizes the team approach.

We realize that at the conclusion of the task, one is tempted to relax and consider the work finished. This cannot be. Although we have made a start, much work remains. Several important movements loom which will undoubtedly effect ABE students and programs.

The present move to career education is central to our programs. How this can be integrated and implemented into ABE programs is a question we must consider.

Another important force to affect us is that of accountability. Our efforts must be evaluated, but we must strive for more relevant approaches to accountability.

The increasing attention given to aging and retirement is interrelated with Adult Basic Education programs and we may see broadened interpretations of our programs to include these areas.

Marriage and family life education are other topics for consideration of Adult Educators.

Finally, at the time of this writing most facets of education are facing severe budget restrictions. How this will affect ABE is not known. We must continue to interpret the need for support of our program to the public.

In conclusion, we must admit we have only made a start. It is exciting to speculate on where we will be one, five, ten, or twenty years from now. But we cannot merely speculate. We must continue to strive for that all-but-[illegible] person having access to the education he needs to attain the good life.

ERIC Clearinghouse
SEP 19 1973
on Adult Education

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